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Sermon on the Gospel for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 18, 9—14.

Self-confidence, self-exaltation is extremely dangerous to spiritual life. It dishonors God, promotes pride, and fills the soul with vain hopes. The arrogant assumption of excellence, which does not belong to us, will exclude us from that grace which can truly exalt us.—However, he that trusts in God under a deep sense of his own unworthiness is blessed and happy.

These truths are expressed in many passages of Holy Writ. Thus St. Peter and St. James both use the same language, declaring: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." And 1 Sam. 2, 3, 4 we hear Hannah sing: "Talk no more," etc., while in the Magnificat Mary, taking Hannah for her model of praise, pours out her divine song: Luke 1, 52, 53.

Likewise this parable is a lofty moral painting, in which the Lord shows how all men may be ranked in two classes, namely, the self-righteous, sin-stained, but unconcerned of it, clothed in filthy rags of human pride; and the humble worshipers, sin-stained, yet conscious of it, confessing it and craving pardon. Let us therefore address ourselves to the text, finding in the introduction and conclusion of the parable the fitting key to its meaning: v. 9. Two evil things are shown in their characters: 1) "They trusted in themselves," which no man can do if he knows the holy Law of God aright; and 2) "they despised others," which we cannot do if we know our own hearts. The conclusion inculcates the moral of the lesson: 14b. Let us therefore consider:

THE JUST SENTENCE OF GOD, CONDEMNING THE SELF-
RIGHTEOUS, AND COMMENDING THE GREAT SINNER.

This judgment is based on,

1. *The difference in the spirit and attitude of the heart and mind,*
2. *In the contrast of the objects sought.*

1.

The wonderful judgment is based upon the difference in the spirit and attitude of the heart and mind, v. 10. Two men pass before us, representing the two great classes of religious men of that day and ours. They are on their way to the house of worship, and both come at the same time. Herewith, however, the resemblance ceases. They came from the very extremes of society, as the world esteems it. The one had established a reputation with men for his great excellence of character, self-denial, and austere life. This estimation was shared also by himself. The other, even in his own estimation, had no claim on the approbation of God or men. Yea, the former looked with horror upon him, as an apostate and an outcast of society. Seeing them approach the house of God, with no other knowledge than that one is esteemed an excellent man, and the other belongs to a class exceedingly offensive to his fellow-men, we should undoubtedly favor the former; "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart," 1 Sam. 16, 7. Let us not pronounce between them until we have observed more closely. Although both are at the altar of sacrifice, both in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, yet their views, feelings, and objects are in complete contrast; the one is the personification of pride, the other, of humility. Beholding them in one picture, as it were, we may note the contrast the more distinctly.

Note the difference in the spirit of their devotion. We need not judge the outward actions further than our Lord has given prominence to them. The one enters the house of God gazing up and about him, as if his heart were filled to overflowing with thankfulness to God and love to man. With him it is but an utterance of pride. His whole bearing shows his opinion of himself: I am satisfied with myself, v. 11a. There is a volume expressed in this verse. If private prayer, the more completely apart the better; but public solitude is abnormal. Pride alone is guilty of such conduct. That is the essence of pride and self-confidence, to stand apart, cold, selfish, self-admiring. But, ask you, was he not grateful to God? Does he not say: "I thank Thee," etc.? Praise is certainly a proper part of prayer and acceptable to God; but though he pretends to pray, he only boasts. His words reach not the ear of God; he utters sounds but not desires. This is really no prayer, for nothing is rendered to God. He simply draws a flattering portrait of himself and holds it up for the admiration of God. His gratitude, so called, is corrupted by the venomous principle of pride. In order to think highly of himself he creates a false standard of excellence, and judges himself according to it. Again, his gratitude is coupled with censoriousness, or unfair comparison with his neighbor, and that consisting in contempt for him, as he says: "or even as this publican." Remember to whom this parable was addressed, v. 9. Can

true gratitude produce that effect? No, but false goodness always does. If God has done more for us than for others, we must be most careful to recognize that it is He who made us to differ, but never can we refer slightly to him who has not been thus highly blessed. But this Pharisee was in his own eyes a saint, whereas the publican, and the best of men, were sinners.

Let us leave this man standing alone, and turn our attention to that poor trembling worshiper who scarcely ventures to cross the threshold of the audience chamber of the Most High. He came not to be seen by men. Dress and manner do not betray that feeling. His business is with God, and since the King has appointed the interview within the temple, he seeks no exalted place, but a corner is good enough. "Standing afar off," describes his place. He wishes to express his sense of moral distance from God and of his unfitness and unworthiness to approach Him. Then "he would not lift . . . breast," v. 13, in sorrow and repentance. He cannot look to heaven, for he has offended its King; nor to the altar, for it condemned him; nor to those around him, for they could not help him. His case was so desperate that none but the Lord could help him. Yea, a great sinner!

The feelings agitating him he puts in the words: v. 13b. Short, but very good is his plea. He needs mercy, mere grace, and he has no claim upon God for it. What a solemn moment! He is looking forward to judgment, and onward to eternity! Well might he bow his head and smite his breast!

Humility is not a mistaken sense of inferiority resulting from a false standard. No, it is self-abasement on account of sin and its consequences. Hence he says: "to me a *sinner*." He had now begun to learn the significance of that word; his eye saw, his soul felt, its dreadful meaning. To be humble is to be willing to know ourselves and our deserts. And did we but know ourselves, how many vain thoughts, how many evil inclinations, how many selfish motives lodge within us, how our words sound in God's ear, and how our actions appear to Him, we should find humility the only rational state for ourselves.

Thus we see manifested in these two men, respectively: self-commendation or self-exaltation, and self-condemnation or self-abasement. Was the self-flattery in the form of thanksgiving wicked? Assuredly so! Yet do we not meet with it in our day? Does not the tongue say: "Thank God, I am not like such and such a one"? Does not the heart second this "Thank God"? Does not the manner show: I am not like you, nor you, I am holier than you? Have these Pharisees ceased to be who know nothing of themselves, but that they are much better than others? And how few are the publicans who know only that they are sinners, who remember their ingratitude for so much mercy? Who compare their meanness with

God's majesty, and their sinfulness with His holiness, and exclaim with Ezra: "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God; for my iniquities are increased over my head, and my trespass is grown unto the heaven"? Where is that true humility which makes us to know our sins, and confess them? Alas, how few acceptable prayers are offered up, how few properly seek reconciliation with their offended God!

2.

The sentence of God is just, not only because the spirit and attitude of the one were so different from those of the other, but also because of the contrast in the objects sought by both.

Both regarded themselves as being obedient to God in their attendance at the temple. But how diametrically opposed to each other are the objects which they seek! Both cannot be right! It is well for us that an infallible judge has pronounced the verdict upon them. They sought, respectively, self-flattery and divine mercy. The Pharisee went to the temple not to seek God, for he had no special occasion for Him, but for self-flattery. He did not go to please God, for nowhere do we find a desire to bring the sacrifice of a broken heart; nor confession of sin, which is continually urged upon us. We find no expression of love and confidence, nor gratitude and praise, but simply a boast under the guise of prayer and thanksgiving. The temple was, no doubt, a delightful place, and the hour of prayer a good season, because they were associated with the sweet indulgence of pride. There the incense of adulation was brought him; even the priests bowed to him with more than usual respect. More important still, there he had a time for leisurely self-recollection, for refreshing his memory with the catalogue of his virtues. And taking for granted that his opinion was God's, he went down to his house, as he supposed, with the approbation of the Searcher of hearts. He gets what he seeks; but it is not mercy nor God's approval.

The publican comes to obtain mercy. Burdened with sin he was, which no man could pardon. He therefore sought God. He thought of himself in the presence of God. Other men's sins did not excuse him. He only is full of their shame and burden. A correct knowledge of the meaning and extent of the Law shows him that he has transgressed it in numberless ways. He is a sinner by nature and practice, in thought, word, and deed, a sinner in spite of all that God has done for him. And then, seeing God's holiness, majesty, and glory, he cries out with Isaiah: "Woe is me! for I am undone." Mercy is what he needs and seeks. This alone will give him peace, will raise him out of the mire of sin, will prepare him for heaven and take him there. Mercy; this mercy is not mere goodness, but is the opposite of justice. Mercy is goodness toward the guilty, as justice is severity toward the guilty. It is the setting aside of the

punishment that is deserved and bestowing blessings upon the miserable which are in no wise merited.

But can God be merciful to sinners? We reply in the words of the royal Psalmist: "There is forgiveness with Thee." The justice and holiness of God has been satisfied by the atonement of Christ, and on this ground "He can be just and the Justifier of him who believes in Christ." For God "laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." The advent of the Son of God into the world is founded on the fact that the human race to a man had departed from God and broken His holy Law. There are no exceptions! Hence to flatter ourselves, or to fortify our good opinion of ourselves with a recital of our excellent qualities and deeds is abhorrent to the most high God, and detracts from the glorious redemption wrought by our Savior. Only the humble and contrite are accepted of God, for He declares that "the proud He knoweth afar off, but to that man will He look who is of an humble and contrite heart." Nothing but pride makes a man regard himself as an exception; nothing but unbelief rejects the provision made for sinners. Faith, however, accepts it.

We find, therefore, a twofold cause for the difference in the results and in the sentence. The one is: Both gained their objects: flattery and mercy, respectively. The other is, that forgiveness, sanctification, grace, and heaven are indeed sought, but not on God's condition, which is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Hence it is not enough to seek a right object, but also, that it be sought in the right way. The fault of the Pharisee was not immorality, nor a neglect of religious worship, but relying upon his negative morality for justification, and substituting an external religious service for the religion of the heart. His prayer has two parts, v. 11b. 12, both of which make the Law and Gospel of no effect. The negative part, which stated what he did not do, was designed to make the Law consist of only negatives, and few of them, and to show that he was not a sinner, and that therefore the Gospel was unnecessary for him. The positive part described his religious service, consisting of a few paltry tithings of herbs and income, fasting and abstaining from food, which he considered as satisfying the demands of the Law and as being a substitute for piety of the heart. He and others, in short, "trusted in themselves;" and God says thereof: "Cursed is he who trusteth in man!" Trusting in one's self is the Pharisee of the human heart. Trusting in Jesus Christ is the vital element of a soul that has no resources in itself, and is cut off on every side from human help.

How dangerous a thing is self-flattery! It is the sin that sticks most closely to every man. It makes his morality a sin, and his religion a mockery! Thinking little of our sins and much of our virtues is the usual habit; and to get as high as we can in our own eyes, rather than see ourselves as God sees us, is our effort. Hence,

when the Word and Spirit of the Lord show us our sins, we find the subject so distasteful that we turn away from it. But here our Savior has furnished us a solemn warning, by showing us pride in its hideous array, strutting before the majesty of heaven, and spreading its gaudy baubles before the all-seeing eye of God. Yes, my beloved hearers, pride leads its victim blindfold and secure from the temple of salvation down to destruction.

Be not deaf, fellow-sinners, to the voice of truth, and close not the ear of mercy to your prayers! Friends may expose us to this danger. They are satisfied with us as we are. So much morality and religion as we have they practically pronounce sufficient to recommend us to them. This being the case, it is difficult to realize that God's judgment should be totally different from theirs. And still, until we realize this difference we shall content ourselves with their favor and slumber on into an eternal death.

Prosperity is oftentimes dangerous to us. How hard is it not to break through the charmed circle of ease, success, enjoyment, and comfort, and in the retirement of the closet candidly and as before the Searcher of hearts survey our innermost desires and recall our many and aggravated sins! Dangerous ease, dangerous success! Great blessings, but how easily abused, how easily turned into a curse!

Danger also lurks in every form of false religion. They all give a low conception of the deity, of our duties toward Him, and are debasing in their tendencies. All of them flatter human nature, make their followers Pharisees, and are the offspring of man's proud heart.

Then see the publican! He casts all his unworthiness and sin upon Him who said: "No man cometh to the Father but by me." In His dear name he came boldly to the throne of grace and obtained mercy, and found "grace to help in time of need." Thus he came, and obtained his desire. It was not the depth of his humility, not the sincerity of his repentance, nor the fervency of his devotion which merited his acceptance. No; mercy and merit are opposite things. It was the merit of a Savior's precious blood which he pleaded, and which shall not be pleaded in vain. For "this man went down to his house justified;" and the reason is added: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." How great the blessing! There is no condemnation for him; he "is accepted in the Beloved," "is passed from death to life."

Are you a degraded sinner, full of unrighteousness and iniquity? Are you conscious of your degradation and ruin by sin? Then take the place in your own estimation which you have in God's. If you say: "My sins are small and few," then you add the crime of the Pharisee to the rest of them. Will you, then, weigh sin in your balances, or in those of heaven and its eternal Judge?

Let us sue for mercy, mercy through the atoning Savior, mercy upon us miserable, perishing sinners! Ask yourself: Where am I seeking justification, through my merits or through Christ's? "By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified." Are you asking justice or mercy? Are you recounting your virtues or your sins?

Have we a Pharisee with us? If so, find yourself in the scene portrayed. See yonder Pharisee in prayer; see him going down to his house, justified in his own eyes, but condemned by the Lord of glory, yea, even by the Savior of sinners!

Are you a sinner in need of mercy? Take your own place, and plead as becomes a sinner! The result: you will be justified immediately, and you will go down to your house justified, and being justified by grace, you will have peace, joy, and blessedness in time and hereafter, in eternity.

May we therefore, after noting God's just sentence in condemning the self-righteous saint, but commending the great sinner, be moved to pray fervently:

Dear Father, let me never be
Joined with the boasting Pharisee;
I have no merits of my own,
But plead the sufferings of Thy Son.

Amen.

H. A. B.

(Theme and parts suggested by E. N. Kirk's "Lectures on the Parables of Our Savior.")

Sermon on the Epistle for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

2 COR. 3, 4—11.

The Word of God, as you all know, contains two distinct doctrines, *viz.*, that of the Law and that of the Gospel. The Law is that doctrine which teaches us what God expects of us, what His will is, according to which it is our duty to live, and it promises us eternal life under the condition that we fulfill all its precepts, while it condemns us if we transgress any of them. The Gospel, on the other hand, teaches us the forgiveness of sin for Christ's sake and through His merit, and promises us heaven without any merit or work on our part, solely by faith in Christ.

These doctrines of the Law and Gospel, however widely they may differ from each other, yet have several important points in which they coincide. In the first place, they were both given by God. This is already evident from the fact that they are both contained in the revealed Word of God, in the Bible, for all that is contained in its sacred pages is given by inspiration of God. The Law, we

learn from the Bible, was implanted by God already at the creation in the heart of man, and later He repeated it from Mount Sinai to Moses and to the children of Israel. The Gospel, however, God revealed after the fall of man. We have the first effulgence of its brightness already in the garden of Eden, where God promised to Adam and Eve a Savior who should bruise the head of the serpent. And this Gospel light became brighter and brighter, until finally all its splendor burst forth at the coming of Christ, in the glorious Gospel dispensation of the New Testament. This, then, is the first point in which the Law and the Gospel coincide: they were both given by God.

Another important point of coincidence is this, that they were both originally given for the purpose of leading man to heaven, of bringing him to everlasting life. This was, originally, the purpose and aim of the Law. For such is its promise: "Do this, and thou shalt live!" Fulfill all my precepts thoroughly and perfectly, and heaven is thine. Had man therefore remained in his state of perfect holiness and obedience to the Law, he would have been saved by his fulfillment of the Law. The Law would have given him life. Only after man had fallen and become a transgressor of the Law did its curse strike him, and only then did it become necessary to send to fallen mankind the free promise of the Gospel, which gives life even to the transgressor of the Law and in spite of its curse. Originally, then, the Law, as well as the Gospel, was intended by God to bring life and salvation to mankind.

Thus we find that between these two doctrines of the Law and the Gospel there is nothing contradictory, but, in reality, a beautiful harmony, the one not contradicting, but rather supplementing the other. But yet there is a great and wide difference between the two. And in our text we find several points of difference mentioned. Let us, then, endeavor to trace up—

SOME IMPORTANT POINTS OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

We will class them under two heads, showing how they differ,

1. *In their effect and purpose;*
2. *In their nature.*

1.

Paul, in the beginning of the text, speaks of "the letter and of the spirit." These terms are the hinges upon which the whole dissertation of the text turns. The meaning of these two terms we must therefore determine before we can at all begin to understand the text. Looking at the context, it is not hard to find their meaning. Immediately in the following verse Paul speaks of the "ministration of death, written and engraven in stones," which, of course, is the Law, or the Ten Commandments. This at once makes it clear that

by "letter" Paul here means the letter of the Law, and by "spirit" the Gospel. This we must well bear in mind to guard against a false interpretation of a portion of this text, something we frequently meet with.

And now, after these preliminary remarks, let us begin with the dissection of the text as a whole. Paul begins with these words: "And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit." Here Paul confesses, both as to himself and the other apostles, that their sufficiency to perform the duties of their office, to preach and teach the Law as well as the Gospel, to divide both doctrines rightly, was not of themselves, but of God. And, my friends, thus it is to-day. To know and understand and teach the difference between the Law and the Gospel, to apply both correctly, nobody is able to do of himself. I do not mean theoretically, but practically. A person can indeed, without the help of God, acquire a mechanical knowledge of what the Law is and what the Gospel is, but to apply it rightly to himself and others is an art which can be learned only in the school of God's Spirit. A preacher who has not this sufficiency of God will apply the Law where he ought to preach the Gospel; he will rebuke the contrite sinner and try to comfort the proud and impenitent. And a self-righteous man will forever seek that in the Law which he ought to seek alone in the Gospel, *viz.*, life and salvation. Oh, let us, then, earnestly pray to God to grant us this sufficiency, rightly to understand the difference between the Law and the Gospel, and rightly to apply them both.

So, then, the first difference between the Law and the Gospel which Paul mentions lies in their purpose and effect: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." That is the effect of these two doctrines: the letter, or the Law, kills, while the spirit, or the Gospel, gives life. The Law kills, it plunges us into temporal and eternal death. That originally was not the purpose of the Law, as we have seen. From the beginning God intended the Law to be a giver of life. By its fulfillment man should enter heaven. That was the purpose for which God had graciously intended the Law. But His purpose was thwarted. Man became a transgressor of the Law, and then the terrible threat of the Lord took effect: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Since that time "the letter killeth." Since then the Law pronounces the verdict of temporal and eternal death upon all mankind; it hurls us all into the fiery abyss of hell. That is now the inevitable effect of the Law. And it is also its purpose now. Since man has become a willful transgressor of God's Law, He now gives the Law to man that it shall kill him. The natural knowledge of God and of His will is given to man, as Paul

expressly states, that he may have no excuse on the Day of Judgment, and thus cannot hope to escape the just punishment of his evil deeds.

But, my friends, though "the letter killeth," though the Law condemns us all, yet we must not despair, for "the spirit giveth life;" the glorious Gospel tidings rescue us from the doom of eternal death to which the Law consigns us. It brings us deliverance from the curse of death. For it tells us of the Savior who tasted death in our place, who quaffed the cup of vengeance, which we ought to have drunk, by suffering the woes of eternal death. It tells us of the God-man who by His vicarious suffering and death delivered us from the power of death. And it brings us, moreover, the promise of life. For deliverance from death means the possession of life. By overpowering eternal death, Christ has merited for us eternal life; by closing the gates of hell, He has thrown open to us the pearly gates of heaven. Thus the spirit, or Gospel, indeed, gives life. Oh, let us not forget this all-important distinction between the Law and the Gospel: the letter of the Law always kills, the Law can only condemn us, because we are its transgressors. "By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified;" nobody can live by it. Only the Gospel can give life; only by believing in Christ can we be saved.

2.

In the second place, there is also a great difference both in the nature of the Law and the Gospel, v. 7—11. Paul here speaks of the glory which the Law and the Gospel, respectively, possess, teaching that the latter has a much greater glory than the former. Speaking of the glory of the Law, he alludes to the narrative in Exodus, that after Moses had been with God on Mount Sinai and had received the Law from Him, his face shone so bright that the children of Israel were not able to look at it, so that he was obliged to veil it when speaking to them. Now this was a picture of the spiritual glory which the Law possesses. Ah, the Law of God is indeed a glorious doctrine. It is so glorious that we sinful children of men cannot look into its dazzling brightness, for we are sinners, while the Law is the mirror of God's holiness and righteousness. The Law of God is so glorious and perfect that all atheists and infidels of all times have in vain endeavored to detect a flaw in its perfect code of morals. It is so perfect that all the laws of man have been shaped according to it.

But however great may be the glory of the Law, it is excelled by the glory of the Gospel. Ah, is not that a glorious doctrine which brings to sinful and lost mankind the joyful tidings of the forgiveness of sin, of life and salvation? Is not that a glorious doctrine which teaches how Christ, the Righteous, has suffered for the unrighteous, how He has fulfilled the Law in their stead, how He has satisfied the demands of divine justice, so that God can now take

the sinner to heaven without ceasing to be just? The glory of the Law consists in this, that it condemns the sinner, in order to satisfy divine justice, but the glory of the Gospel consists in this, that it absolves and justifies the sinner, in order to satisfy divine grace and mercy. Which of the two is the more glorious?

This difference in the degree of glory between the Law and the Gospel is a necessary consequence of the difference in their nature. This Paul shows very beautifully in the verses read before. Paul again calls the Law "the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones," while the Gospel he calls "the ministration of the spirit." The Law is the "ministration of death," because it pronounces the verdict of death upon the sinners, as we heard before. This "ministration of death" was "written and engraven in stones." For God wrote the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone with His own finger before giving them to Moses. This was typical of the character or nature of the Law. As the script on these stones was unchangeable and could not be erased, so the demands of the Law are unchangeable and its curses and threats must stand forever. Into all eternity the majestic tables of stone with the divine Law will remain unchanged and condemn the sinner. Its demands and penalties are irrevocable. That is the glory of the divine Law, that "not one jot or tittle of it shall pass away till all be fulfilled." It is an awful glory that the Law possesses; its glory is terrible for the sinner.

But, my friends, not so the glory of the Gospel. "How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?" The glory of the Gospel is of a different nature. It is the "ministration of the spirit." By the Gospel we receive the Spirit of God. For thus Paul questions the Galatians: "This only would I learn of you: Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?" And the answer, of course, is: By the hearing of faith, by the Gospel. Alone by the Gospel, then, the Spirit of God is given to us and enters our heart. But this Spirit is not a spirit of bondage; nay, He is "the Spirit of adoption, and cries in our hearts: Abba, Father!" He teaches us that for Christ's sake God has adopted us as His dear children and wishes to take us to heaven. Oh, is not that indeed a glorious, a surpassingly glorious doctrine which brings us this certainty of our adoption by God as His dear children? Truly, does not this mild glory of the Gospel far transcend the majestic but terrible glory of the Law?

Paul now reiterates what he has already said, but gives it a slightly different turn. He proceeds: "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." The Law is the ministration of condemnation. It condemns the sinner, because he cannot fulfill its

precepts. The Law is like that mysterious hand which wrote the verdict of wicked King Belshazzar on the wall: "Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin." "Thou hast been weighed and found wanting, and thy kingdom shall be taken away from thee." Ha, the sinner sees that mysterious hand of the divine Law and its terrible verdict written against the wall, and like Belshazzar his knees begin to totter and his heart to beat with terror and fear. Such is the terrible glory of the Law: it is "the ministration of condemnation." But oh, how different the Gospel! It is the "ministration of righteousness," *i. e.*, it teaches us that there is a righteousness for us outside of our own fulfillment of the Law, *viz.*, the righteousness of Christ, which avails for us, and by which we can escape the punishment of our sins and enter that heaven into which nothing unclean can enter. The glory of the Gospel, then, is like the glory which shone about Paul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, which indeed made him tremble at first, but which called him back from his way of perdition and made him a chosen vessel of Christ and God.

Now, the last difference between the Law and the Gospel which Paul mentions is this: "For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." The Law is done away with. The legal dispensation of the Old Testament ended with Christ. The ceremonial laws of the Old Testament are no longer binding upon us. Nor are we any longer under the moral law in such a way that we must fulfill it for our salvation. For "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth." There is no longer any Law for the righteous. But the Gospel remaineth. Ever since the fall of man until this day, and for all the time to come, until the Day of Judgment, the Gospel has been, is, and shall be the only way of salvation for sinful mankind. The Gospel remains what it always has been. Thus, then, the deduction of St. Paul is legitimate: "If that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." The glory of transient things must necessarily be transitory. For the glory of the thing cannot remain after the thing itself is gone. Thus, also, the glory of the Law passed away when Christ came and put an end to the Law. But the glory of the Gospel remains, and is therefore the greater of the two.

Let us not forget these important distinctions between the Law and the Gospel: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The Law is a "ministration of death," the Gospel a "ministration of the spirit." The Law is a "ministration of condemnation," the Gospel a "ministration of righteousness." The Law was done away with by Christ; the Gospel remaineth. If we retain these points of difference we shall learn rightly to divide and to apply both doctrines for our salvation. May God's Spirit teach us this heavenly art! Amen.

G. L.

Confessional Address.

Ps. 40, 11—13.

Disconsolate grief speaks from these words. With the Ethiopian, who was pondering a similar text, we inquire: "Of whom," etc., Acts 8, 34. In v. 7 of this psalm David writes: "Lo, I come," etc. This language is referred to Christ Hebr. 10, 7. Christ, according to the Nicene Creed, "spake by the prophets." He announced His coming through them, and described His mission. Many passages of the Old Testament must be understood as we would understand the words of a person who reads to us a letter from another person: while he reads he seems to talk of himself every time he uses the pronoun I. But understanding the situation, we at once transfer the words from the reader who is standing before us to the author of the letter who is absent. We must do this with the text before us: David wrote these words, but Christ speaks them of Himself. This cry of distress and prayer for mercy is a scene from the life of the Redeemer seen with prophetic eye a thousand years before its actual occurrence. Thus Christ "in the days of His flesh offered," etc., Hebr. 5, 7. Many a night He spent in such battles of prayer as this text pictures. Desert wilds heard His agonized cries. Even when the crowds thronged about Him in the cities, it was observed that His spirit groaned within Him. The burden of a world's woe lay upon Him, and there are hints scattered through all the Gospels that He did not always conceal it. It was not in Gethsemane or on Golgotha that men for the first time knew Him to be "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." His herald John even could point to Him and exclaim: "Behold," etc., John 1, 29. John saw something resting on the meek Christ that no human eye could discern: the burden of a world of sin. On this object, beloved communicants, we shall fix our attention now, and thus with God's assistance prepare for the solemn act for which we are met. I wish to speak of

CHRIST, THE BEARER OF SIN,

and to show,

1. *That it is, indeed, sin that He bears,*
2. *But that by bearing it He has taken it away.*

1.

"Innumerable evils," says the Savior, "have compassed me about." Yes, His was a hard lot. Persecuted in infancy, misunderstood even by His enlightened mother, He grew up among brethren who despised Him. John tells us that His relatives jeered at Him when it became known that He was about to begin His life-work at Jerusalem. Think of the incident at Nazareth! Like an angel He had stood among His townsmen; gracious had been the words which dropped from His lips; but they gnashed their teeth upon Him and hurried Him to the brink of a precipice to cast Him down. Think of that winter day when He was accosted in Solomon's porch by the Pharisees, who threatened to stone Him, as they had been ready to do on a former occasion. Think of the frequent traps they had laid for Him; how they watched His speech and dogged His

step to overtake Him in a fault! And then turn to the circle of His followers and friends: a fickle, half-hearted band, filled with doubt till the very moment of His ascension, infected with vain ambitions, and impossible schemes of worldly glory and self-aggrandizement. Truly, never was a grander mission given a sorrier reception than in the case of the Redeemer. It seemed to end in dismal failure when He was hanged upon the cross. And we imagine we can sympathize with a person who expresses grief such as this in our text: "Innumerable evils have compassed me about."

But is this merely an expression of grief, of hopes blasted, of love refused, a wail of despair over thwarted plans of mercy, and is it our sympathy that the Savior wishes to engage? Are we really here to—pity Christ? Impossible! We look again into our text, and another cause for our Savior's grief is suggested to us. He specifies the evils of which He has spoken. He says: "Mine iniquities," etc., v. 12. His iniquities? The Son of God speaks of His sin! He who is holy, blameless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens, He crouches like an abject before his judge and pleads in the pitiful language of an outcast: "Withhold," etc., vv. 11. 13. We imagine we can see Him like the stricken publican, His guilt bowing His head with shame, His eye afraid to meet God's eye, and His oppressed heart groaning: "Be merciful unto me a sinner!" Yes, if there is anything clearly discernible in this text, it is this, that Christ is troubled, deeply troubled about sin, and that, *His* sin. The faults and shortcomings of His friends He bore with patience; the malice and opposition of His pronounced enemies He met with fortitude, and returned love for hatred; the hardships of His earthly lot drew from His lips no expression of bitterness. Christ never uttered a carnal complaint. Accordingly, we must accustom ourselves to understand this cry of anguish to be wrung from Him only by the terror, the woe, and the weight of heinous, hideous sins.

But does not this view mystify us and darken the text? There is no sin in Christ; He Himself has challenged His adversaries to convince Him of sin, by the divine law of the Decalogue. The Roman judge declares Him innocent by the standard of his civil code. Christ is without blemish and without spot. Yet He complains about *His* iniquities!? Have you read, beloved, that profound utterance in 2 Corinthians over which one can sit hours pondering and never exhausting its meaning? I mean this statement: "God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin." That means that Christ is a sinner by imputation. Let me illustrate. Cain slays Abel; Cain is a sinner; Cain must die. Cain cares not; but God cares. God so loves Cain as to send His only-begotten Son to take Cain's place. How? In this wise: God resolves to assume that Cain has not slain his brother, but that another has done it, that His own Son has done it. And with His Son God now proceeds to deal for the murder of Abel. He lays Cain's sin upon His Son, and His Son assumes it. He humbles Himself to become like as Cain. He undergoes the terrors of an evil conscience for Cain. Cain's sin sets Him wild with grief. He inclines His head to receive the death blow of justice for Cain's murder.

This view of our text excites our wonder and admiration: wonder at the inscrutable counsel of God's mercy, admiration for the superhuman unselfishness of Christ. But again I must ask, Is that what we are here for? Does Christ want our applause? Let us stop to think once more. Scripture does not say: "God made Christ to be sin for Cain;" it says: "He was made sin for us." What have we done? God alone, beloved, fully knows the measure of our iniquities; but perhaps we know in part, and feel even now in our hearts, that we have sinned. But whether we know and feel any particular sin or sins or not, so God's Word says and so it is: Christ bears *our* sin, and the bitter cry in our text was wrung from His Redeemer's lips by our iniquity. All the guile of our hearts, all the malice of our lips, and all the guilt of our hands, together with the unrest, the bitterness of soul, the anguish of heart, the terror and despair that have at any time resulted from our sin, have been laid upon Christ. God has not asked our counsel before making this transfer; He has simply made it. Christ has not asked our consent; He has simply taken the load upon Him. We cannot change the case now, or reason ourselves out of any share in this transaction by mistaken notions of our own worthiness. We are bound up with the entire world into one vast bundle of iniquity and laid on the patient soul of God's Son. This is the truth that we should bring home to ourselves individually: Engl. Hymnbook, 77, 4—6.

It is sorrow over sin, beloved, that this text enjoins upon us. Christ wants not *our* sympathy, He desires not our applause; He craves our contrite, penitent hearts. We shall be addressed an hour hence with these words: "Take, eat; take, drink: this is the body and blood of Christ, given and shed for thee," *i. e.*, in thy place! Let it be understood that we recognize our guilt resting upon the divine Burden-bearer, who alone could bear it; and that we make His agony and despair our own.

2.

Christ has borne *our* sins; that fact should humble us. But we should feel lifted up by this other fact, that He has borne them. This is a fact. Note the striking language of our text: the evils of which Christ complains have "compassed Him about." This is a warlike phrase. Like an army the sins of the world surround Christ; they close in upon Him; they leave Him no vantage ground, no avenue of escape. He beholds with undisguised horror the fearful state in which He is placed. He knows the hour is come when the bitter cup shall be put to His lips, which He should desire to pass from Him. The situation grows more distressing: the Redeemer cries: "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me." The death-grapple has now begun in which the life shall be wrung from the Prince of Life, and the wages of sin, death in all its forms, shall be meted out to Him who took upon Him, as the Lamb of God, the sins of the world. He says: "I am not able to look up." He has gone down before the enemy. A worm, not a man, He writhes in an indescribable anguish of heart before the Judge. The load is superhuman; His iniquities "are more than the hairs upon His head;" like a heavy burden they are too heavy for Him; the ruby perspira-

tion is beginning to ooze from His pores; He is weary and faint from suffering. And it requires the ministering service of kindly spirits detailed for this sad task to support Him and to brave Him for the end. Otherwise He is alone treading the wine-press of God's anger. He feels and declares that God has turned against Him. "My heart faileth me," He cries. That is the end. "Father, into Thine hands I commend my spirit," He says as He inclines His head and expires. And they bear Him out to the grave. Sin has wrought its direst and last effect. None of its horrors have been mitigated for Him; He has emptied the cup to the dregs. He has borne sin and has taken it away.

To our flesh this is not a pleasant picture to contemplate. But what inexhaustible wealth of comfort is treasured up in the agonies of our Savior! Oftentimes even the discovery of what we are inclined to call an innocent mistake, an indiscretion, robs us of our rest of mind. A more serious defect in our conduct can completely unnerve us. Our conscious sins can kindle the fires of hell in our breast, and give us a foretaste of the second death. And they would undo us, were it not for the cheering, inspiring view of the cross on which our Savior died. That looms up in the night of our despair and beckons God's forgiveness and pardon and peace to our poor undeserving heart. What no reason can conceive, what the most sanguine hope cannot believe possible, that is an adamant fact: mercy has prevailed over justice in our behalf. The suffering and death of Christ are indisputable evidence that our guilt has been canceled. The effects of sin which we must experience while we are still in the flesh are but painted terrors. Let us appreciate this Gospel, and let us remember that our appreciation of our Savior's work will be in proportion as the sense of our iniquities is really alive in us. The merits of Christ are balm to all, but he cherishes the precious remedy most who knows that he needs it.

You may each, beloved communicants, apply the remedy to your personal sins and say: This and this and this is done away with. I shall not die! In the eyes of men it would harm me if they knew of them; their temporal effects I shall have to bear while I am in the body, and even these God tempers so that I can bear them. But He of whom I should be most afraid, my Father in heaven, assures me that He has no charge against me, that I am in Christ and, through Christ, His dear child, that heaven is my undisputed portion. I can rejoice in the midst of my griefs, and rise superior to my utter unworth. Now that I have been justified by faith I have peace with God through my Lord Jesus Christ.

This truth shall again be sealed to you, beloved, an hour hence. As you shall stand at this altar and hear the precious assurance: "Take, eat; take, drink: this was given and shed for thy sins!" may your hearts leap with joy; for it is verily so: your sin has been taken away by the Bearer of our burden, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

May God bless your communion! May He send you away replenished with grace for your various tasks, and give you to do by His mighty power the works of His Son in patience, in love, in joy unto your sanctification and perfection in glory. Amen.